



SESSION ONE

THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER



CHECKING IN

Before you begin this study, review the Small Group Guidelines on page 204 of this study guide.

What does prayer mean to you?

KEY VERSE

*“If you remain in me and my words remain in you,
ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.”*

JOHN 15:7 (NIV)

Watch the video lesson now, and follow along in your outline.

SESSION ONE

THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER

Prayer is God’s idea. If he didn’t want to hear from you, he wouldn’t invite you to pray. God wants to hear from you because he loves you. He cares about every detail of your life. There is nothing too big or too small for his attention.

FOUR PRIMARY PURPOSES FOR PRAYER

- Prayer is an act of _____ .

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.”

JOHN 15:5–7 (NIV)

- Prayer is an act of _____ .

“I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”

JOHN 15:15–16 (NIV)

- Prayer is an act of _____ .

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6–7 (ESV)

“I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.”

JOHN 16:23–24 (NIV)

You don’t have what you want because you don’t ask God for it.

JAMES 4:2 (NLT)

He fulfills the desires of those who reverence and trust him.

PSALM 145:19 (TLB)

Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.

PSALM 37:4 (NIV)

“Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”

MATTHEW 7:9–11 (NIV*)

- Prayer is an act of _____ .

Prayer is God’s way of letting us partner with him to accomplish his purposes.

“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father.”

JOHN 14:12 (NIV)

“And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”

JOHN 14:13–14 (NIV)

Your prayers release the power of God into the most hopeless situations. They can penetrate places where no man or woman can go, whether that’s a closed, international border, or the hardened heart of a skeptic. Prayer makes the impossible possible.

The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.

PROVERBS 21:1 (NIV)

Discovery Questions

Please don’t feel pressured to discuss every discovery question. It’s okay to choose the questions that are right for your group. The point is not to race through the session; the point is to take time to let God work in your lives.

- What role has prayer played in shaping your relationship with God?

- Based on today’s lesson about the purpose of prayer, what can you do to deepen your conversation with God?

- What are you hoping to get out of this study in the next forty days?

Putting It Into Practice

We don't just want to be hearers of the Word; we also need to be doers of the Word (James 1:22). This section contains suggestions for your group and for you individually to apply the things you are learning. Be sure to leave time each week to review this material.

IN YOUR GROUP PRAY TOGETHER

What are you lacking in your life simply because you've never asked God for it? What is your greatest need? Don't hold back. Share your prayer request with your group, then pray together. You can record your prayer requests in "Our Prayers & Praise" on page 204 of this study guide.

Praying together is one of the great privileges of small group life.

If praying in a group is new or uncomfortable for you, we encourage you to start by praying single-sentence prayers. Don't worry about how fancy you sound. God isn't looking for eloquence. He just wants honesty. Talk to God like you talk to a friend. Give everyone a chance to pray, but don't insist on it. Over time, your group will feel much more comfortable praying together. Pray for one another and for your church family as you begin 40 Days of Prayer.

NOTES:



IN YOUR LIFE DAILY PRAYER

Set a daily alarm as a reminder to pause and pray this week. This idea works best if you pick the same time every day. Are you a morning person? Then pick a time in the morning. If you're more alert in the afternoon or evening, then choose a time that fits the way you're wired. The best time to pray is when you're at your best. Consistency is more important than quantity; it's more important to be mindful to pray every day this week than it is to spend a lengthy time in prayer on one or two days. If you're already consistent with your prayer time, or you're looking for a way to get started with prayer, then turn to the "Daily Prayer of Surrender" on page 176.

NOTES:

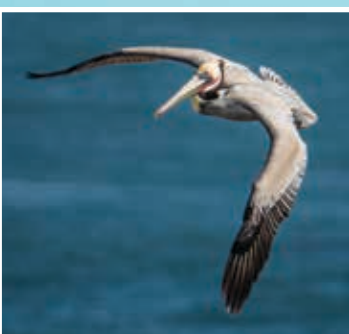
Daily Prayer Journal

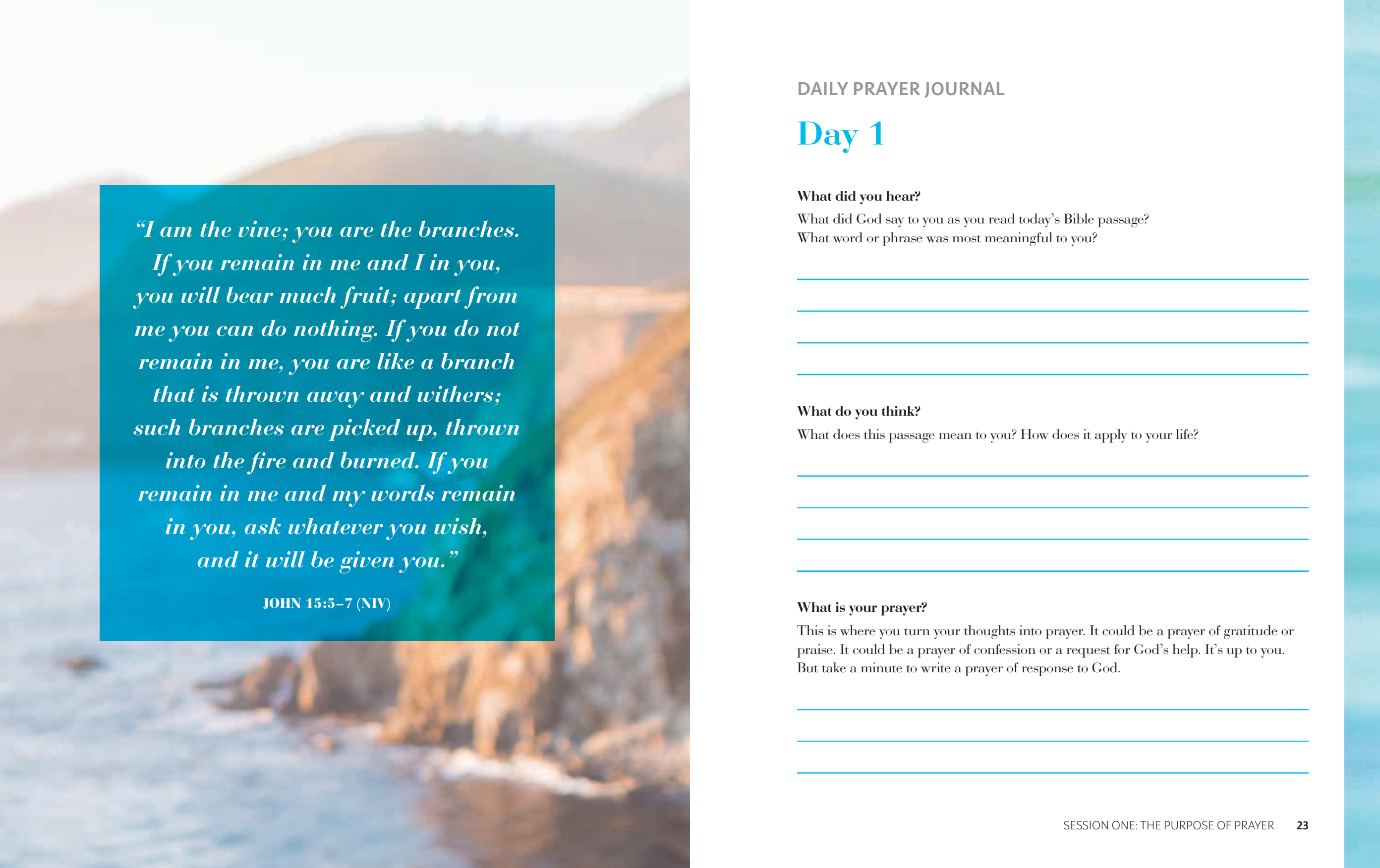
Starting on page 22 you will find Bible verses and daily prayer journal prompts for “The Purpose of Prayer”. Take a few minutes each day to read the verse several times, slowly. Emphasize a different word or phrase each time you read the passage. Underline key words or phrases that are especially meaningful to you. Follow the prompts and write down your responses in the journal space provided. Finish with a prayer.

Before You Go

WHAT DECISIONS DO YOU NEED TO MAKE AS A GROUP THIS WEEK?

Healthy groups share responsibilities and group ownership. Turn to the Small Group Calendar on page 206 of this study guide. Fill out the calendar together, noting where you will meet each week, who will facilitate your meeting, and who will provide a meal or snack. Note special events, socials, or days off as well. Your group host will be very appreciative, and everyone will have a lot more fun together. Coordinating the group calendar is a great role for someone in your group to fill. Also start collecting basic contact information, including phone numbers and email addresses. The Small Group Roster on page 207 of your study guide is a good place to record this information.





“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.”

JOHN 15:5–7 (NIV)

DAILY PRAYER JOURNAL

Day 1

What did you hear?

What did God say to you as you read today’s Bible passage?

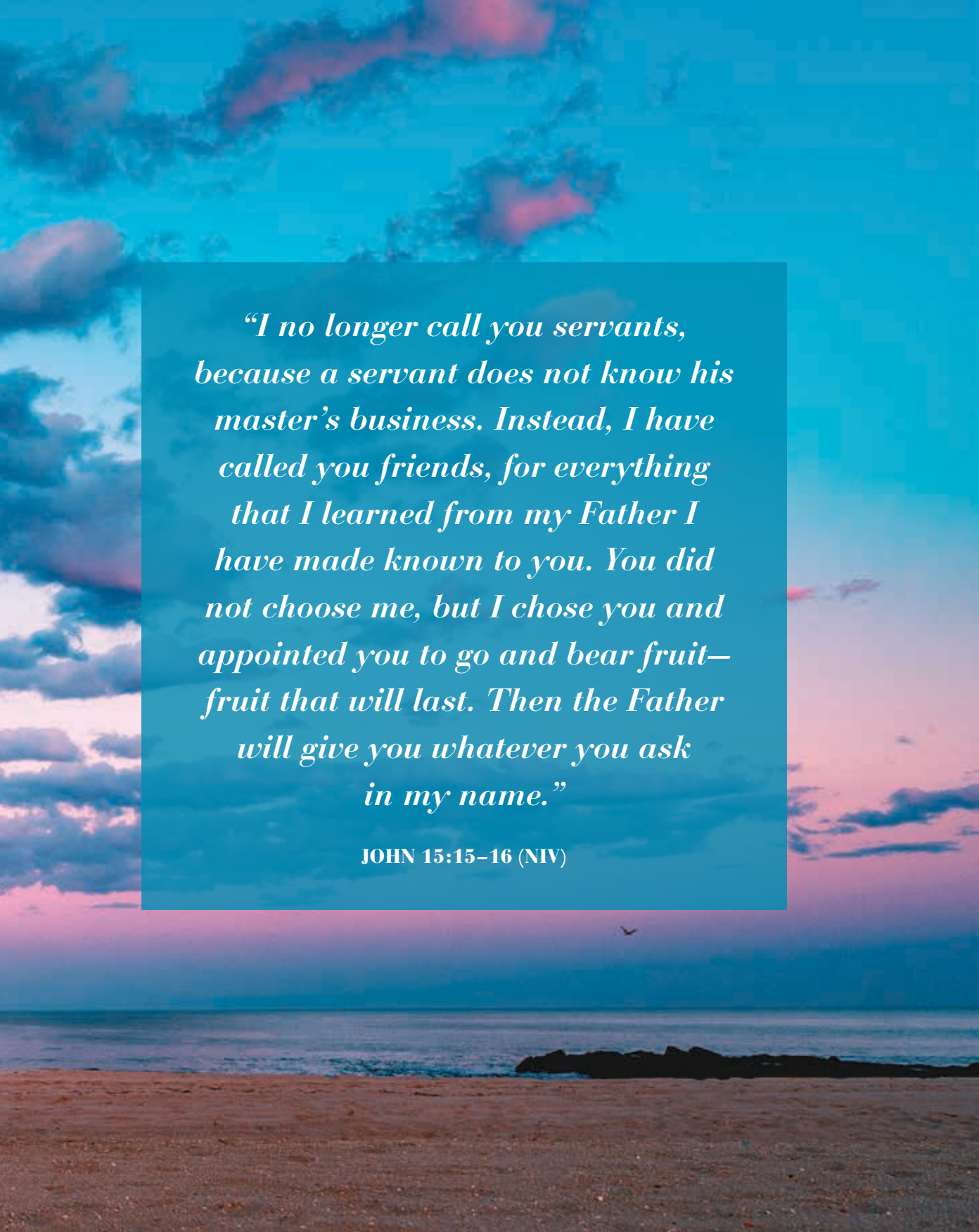
What word or phrase was most meaningful to you?

What do you think?

What does this passage mean to you? How does it apply to your life?

What is your prayer?

This is where you turn your thoughts into prayer. It could be a prayer of gratitude or praise. It could be a prayer of confession or a request for God’s help. It’s up to you. But take a minute to write a prayer of response to God.



“I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”

JOHN 15:15–16 (NIV)

DAILY PRAYER JOURNAL

Day 2

What did you hear?

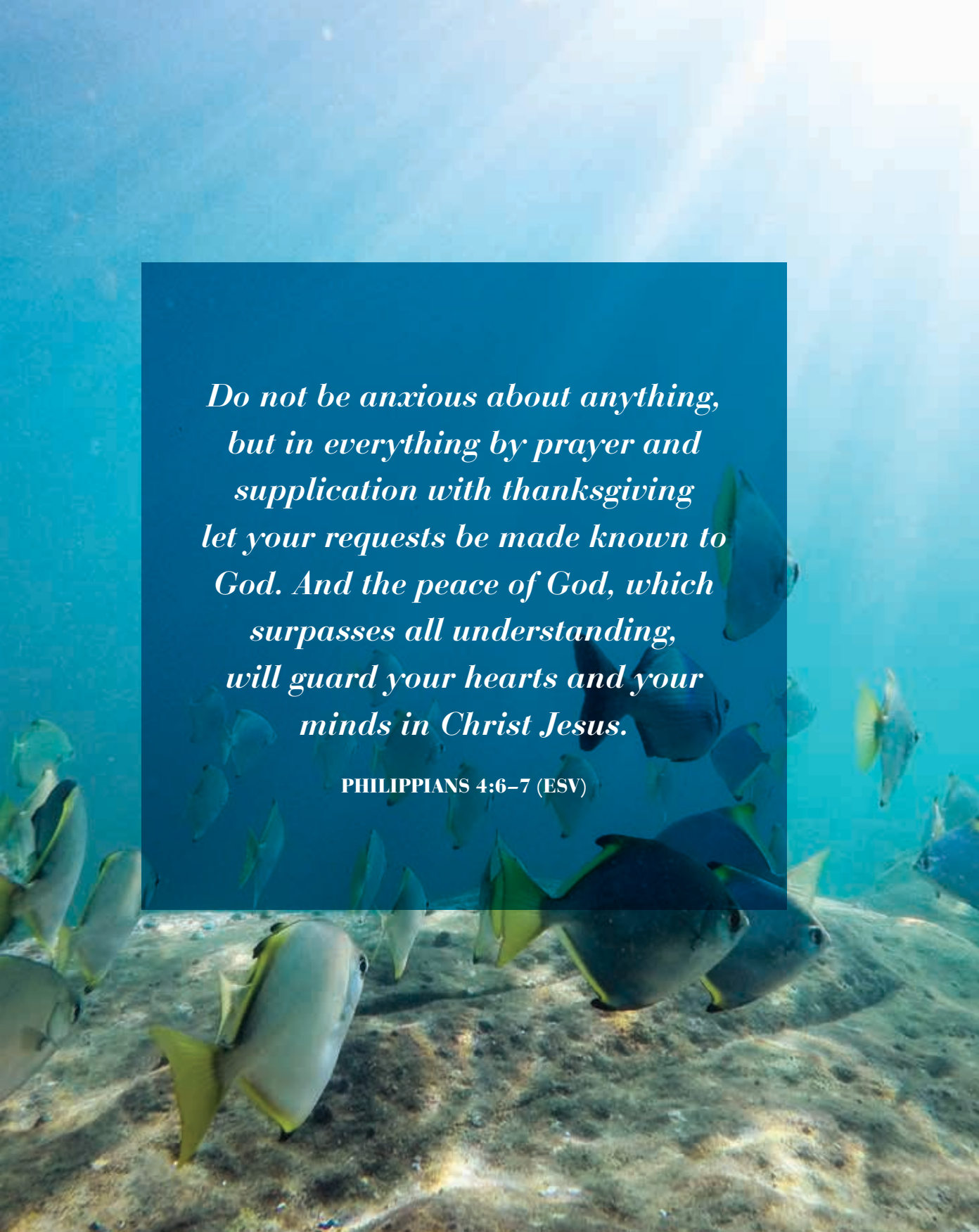
What did God say to you as you read today’s Bible passage?
What word or phrase was most meaningful to you?

What do you think?

What does this passage mean to you? How does it apply to your life?

What is your prayer?

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*Do not be anxious about anything,
but in everything by prayer and
supplication with thanksgiving
let your requests be made known to
God. And the peace of God, which
surpasses all understanding,
will guard your hearts and your
minds in Christ Jesus.*

PHILIPPIANS 4:6–7 (ESV)

DAILY PRAYER JOURNAL

Day 3

What did you hear?

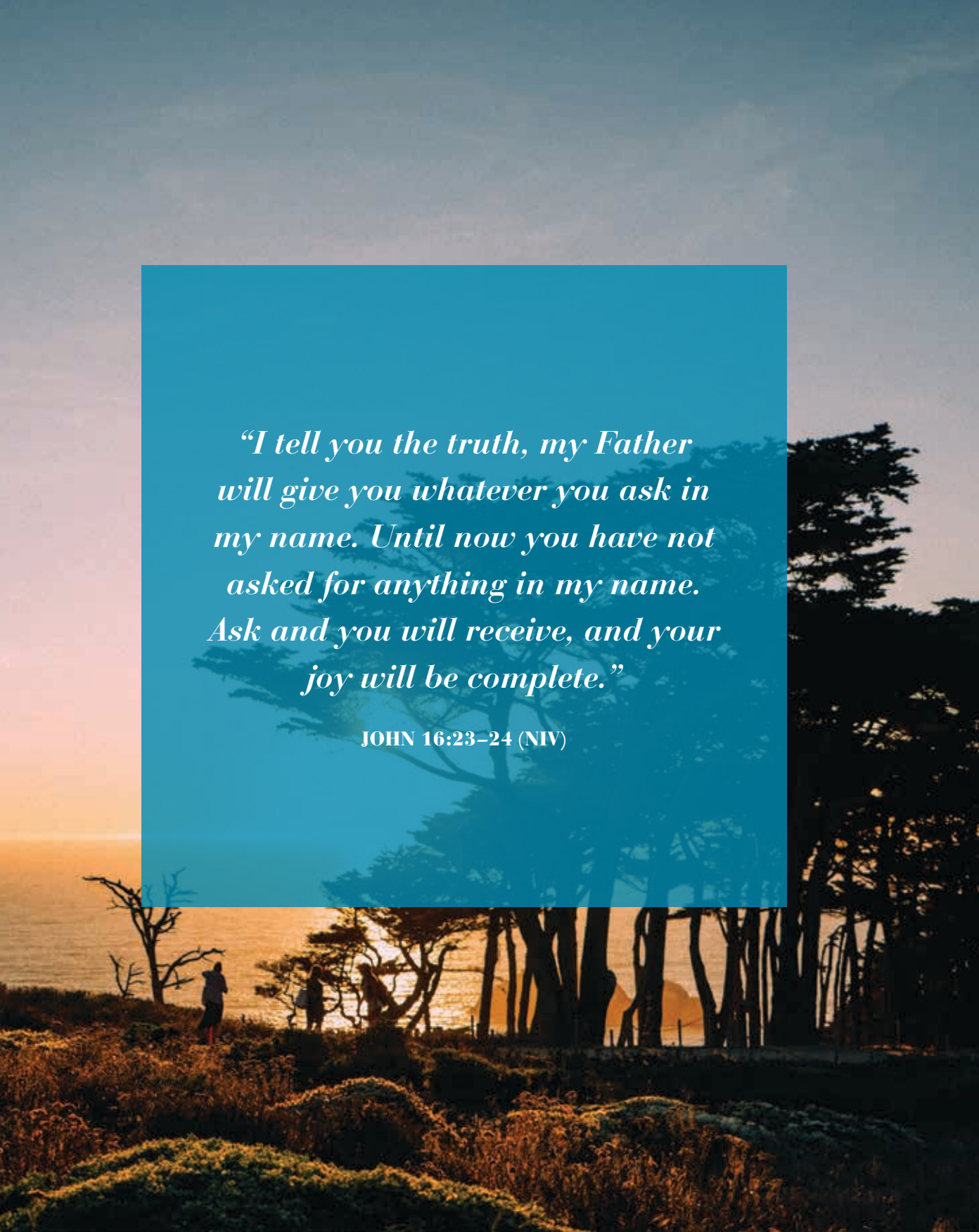
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“I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.”

JOHN 16:23–24 (NIV)

DAILY PRAYER JOURNAL

Day 4

What did you hear?

What did God say to you as you read today’s Bible passage?

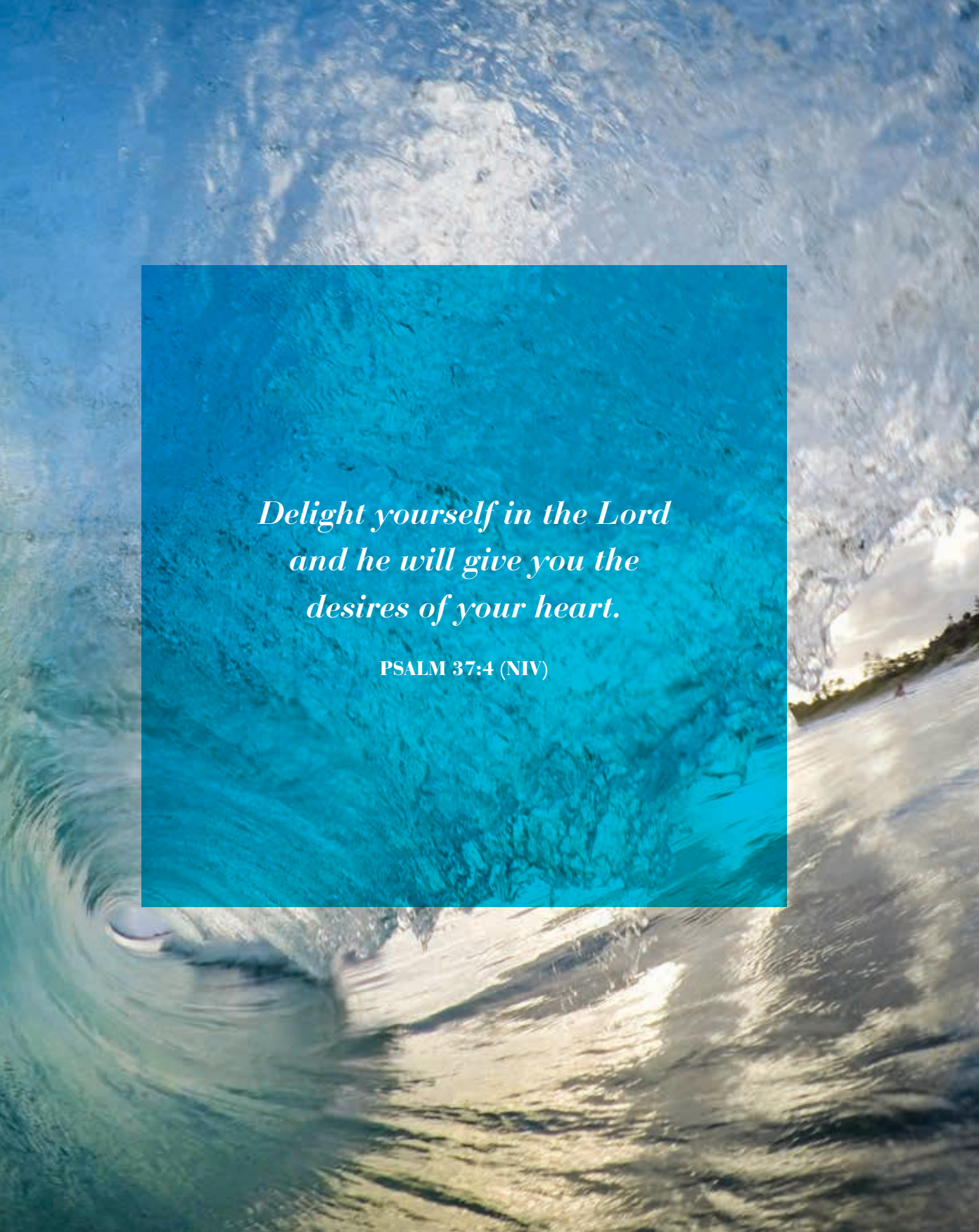
What word or phrase was most meaningful to you?

What do you think?

What does this passage mean to you? How does it apply to your life?

What is your prayer?

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*Delight yourself in the Lord
and he will give you the
desires of your heart.*

PSALM 37:4 (NIV)

DAILY PRAYER JOURNAL

Day 5

What did you hear?

What did God say to you as you read today's Bible passage?

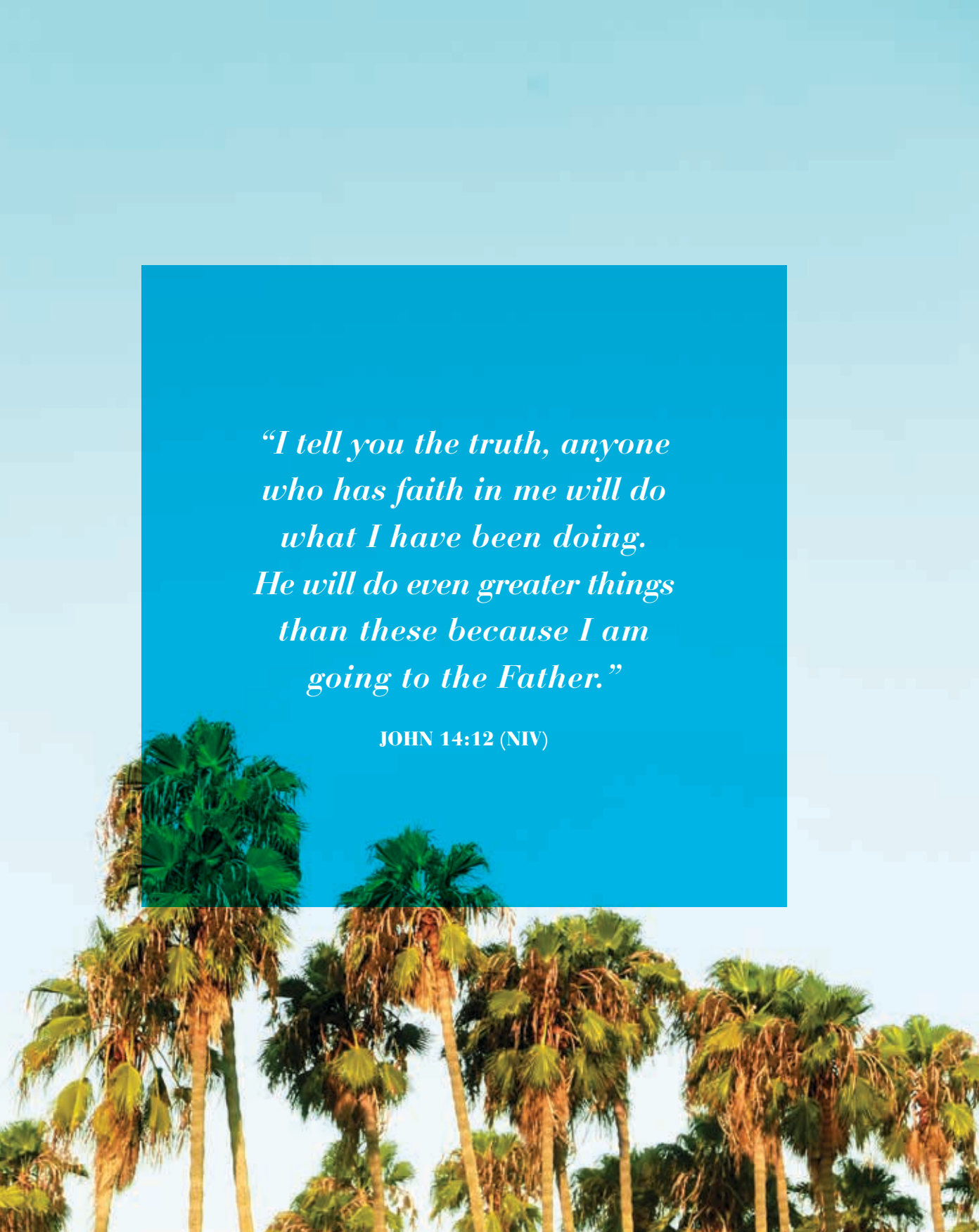
What word or phrase was most meaningful to you?

What do you think?

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*“I tell you the truth, anyone
who has faith in me will do
what I have been doing.
He will do even greater things
than these because I am
going to the Father.”*

JOHN 14:12 (NIV)

DAILY PRAYER JOURNAL

Day 6

What did you hear?

What did God say to you as you read today’s Bible passage?

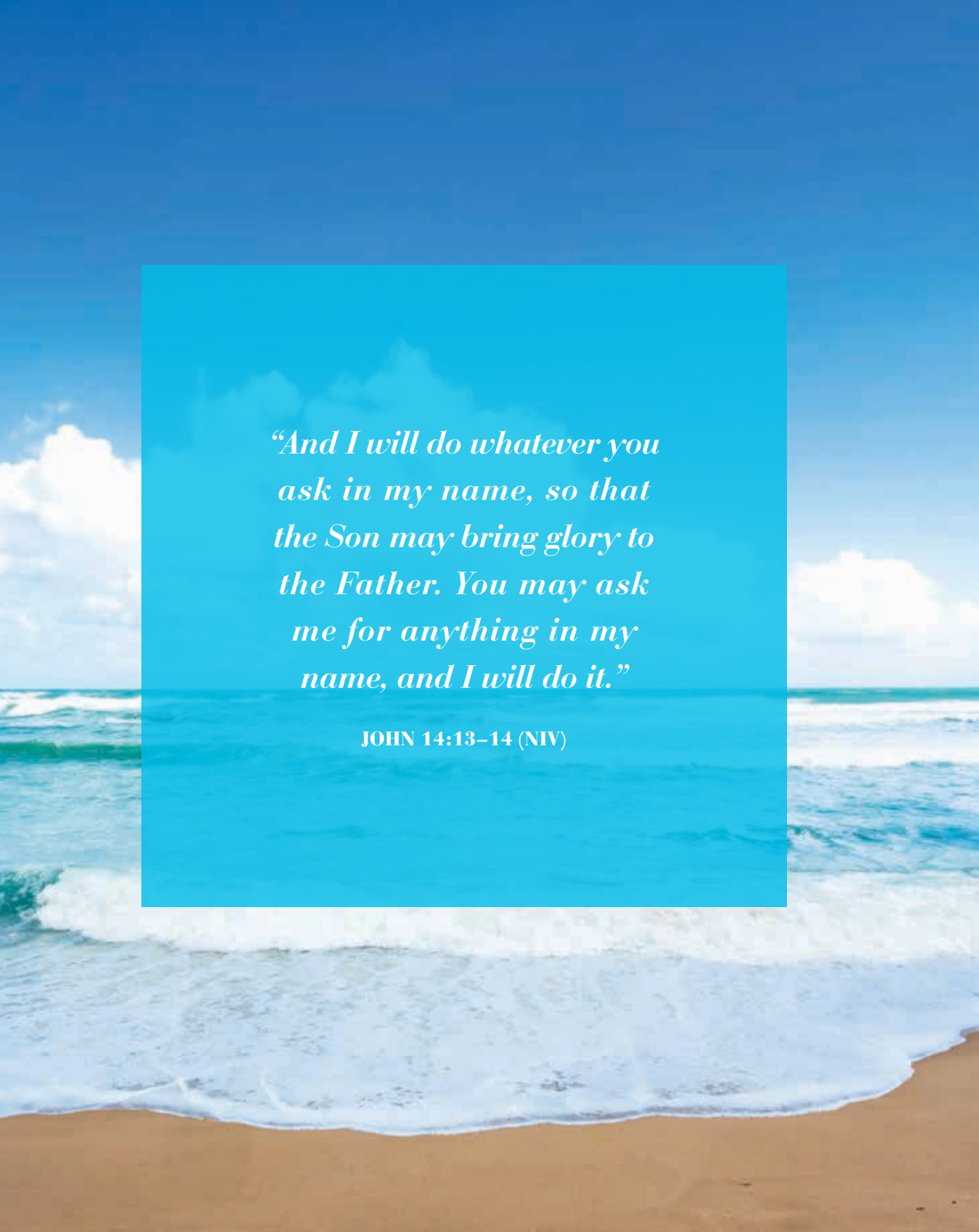
What word or phrase was most meaningful to you?

What do you think?

What does this passage mean to you? How does it apply to your life?

What is your prayer?

This is where you turn your thoughts into prayer. It could be a prayer of gratitude or praise. It could be a prayer of confession or a request for God’s help. It’s up to you. But take a minute to write a prayer of response to God.



“And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”

JOHN 14:13–14 (NIV)

DAILY PRAYER JOURNAL

Day 7

What did you hear?

What did God say to you as you read today’s Bible passage?
What word or phrase was most meaningful to you?

What do you think?

What does this passage mean to you? How does it apply to your life?

What is your prayer?

This is where you turn your thoughts into prayer. It could be a prayer of gratitude or praise. It could be a prayer of confession or a request for God’s help. It’s up to you. But take a minute to write a prayer of response to God.
